



Northern Great Plains Network

Inventory and Monitoring Monthly Report

July 2003



FY04 Budget: The latest rumor on the FY04 budget isn't great, but it isn't terrible. As you know, in FY03 we received \$150k in "Vital Signs" (i.e., monitoring) startup money. If we follow the funding schedule of the other networks (remember, we're number 32 out of 32 on the funding list!) we would receive our full funding in FY04 (minus the \$150k of startup money which is viewed as an advance) - in other words, about \$700k. Unfortunately, it now looks like we will receive only \$250k in FY04 for Vital Signs. Although a reduction, it's still more than some people were suggesting a few weeks back. That \$250k of base dollars is in addition to the \$200k we will receive in FY04 for inventories (FY04 is the last year for those dollars). Stay tuned.

Field Inventories: The field inventories are generally wrapping up for the year with a bit of herp and plant work left to go. It was another successful year with many new park records, and in some cases new county records. For example, a new plant was identified at Ft. Laramie NHS that is not only a new record for the park, but one of only three occurrences in Wyoming. Likewise, the bat inventories may have produced new county records. All in all, a very good year.

Biological Technician Position: I'm happy to report that Marcia Wilson has accepted the position of permanent Biological Technician for the I&M Program. She will EOD on September 7. Marcia last worked with USGS-Biological Resources Division. Her background emphasizes birds, but she is also knowledgeable of tabular and spatial databases. She will share the office with me at Mt. Rushmore NMEM. Marcia's initial duties will be to continue populating the NPSpecies database, scanning and organizing resource-related documents, and working with the inventory investigators to keep those projects moving forward.

Data Manager Position: Well the Data Manager position is again moving forward, however, not at the grade we had originally hoped. After 4-5 months of negotiations and discussions with Personnel the Board of Directors finally decided to settle for hiring at the FPL of GS-11. Although a disappointment, it's a relief to know that we are moving forward. You can expect to see the announcement on the street within a few weeks.

Development of the Aquatic Portion of Vital Signs Plan: I'm happy to report that Dr. Nels Troelstrup of South Dakota State University has agreed to develop the aquatic portion of our Vital Signs monitoring plan. Dr. Troelstrup has been very responsive and easy to work with (yes, I had some problems with my initial choice, but I think it will work out for the best). We are funding the project through the Northern Great Plains CESU using our FY03 funds. In addition to data mining, indicator selection, and protocol development, the agreement with SDSU calls for a field assessment of our aquatic resources, which should provide valuable baseline data. I expect Dr. Troelstrup and his assistants to begin visiting parks this fall.

Development of Plant Portion of Vital Signs Plan: Dr. Amy Symstad has agreed in principle to develop the vegetation component of the Vital Signs plan. And better yet, USGS-BRD has agreed not to charge us for her time. The only cost I foresee at this time will be for her travel. Obviously I am thrilled with this arrangement. Amy expects to start working on this project in the very near future, which means she may soon be contacting your park to talk vegetation monitoring.

Vouchers: In early August I will personally deliver many of our voucher specimens to the Bell Museum at the University of Minnesota. As discussed in previous newsletters, we now have an agreement with the Bell to prepare and curate vertebrates. This agreement includes all vertebrates from Network parks, whether collected as part of the I&M Program or otherwise. One exception to the specimens going directly to the Bell Museum is that our shrews will first go to Fort Hays State University in Kansas where a graduate student is conducting a taxonomic study. The student will collect tissue for purposes of DNA analysis, and then prepare the specimens using standard museum practices and then return them to me. I will then forward to the Bell for long-term storage. This is good example of the unforeseen benefits of collecting vouchers.

Network Technical Committee: As you all know, we have developed a Network Charter and established a Board of Directors. Next on the to-do list is forming a Network Technical Committee, comprised of a representative from each park in the Network. I have solicited designees from each superintendent and have received the following names:

<u>Park</u>	<u>Designee</u>
Agate Fossil Beds NM	Ruthann Knudson
Badlands NP	Sandee Dingman
Devils Tower NM	Jim Cheatham
Fort Laramie NHS	?
Fort Union Trading Post NHS	Andy Banta
Jewel Cave NM	Todd Suess
Knife River Indian Villages NHS	?
Missouri NRR	Wayne Werkmeister
Mount Rushmore NMEM	Eric Nelson
Niobrara NSR	Carmen Blausey
Scotts Bluff NM	Bob Manasek
Theodore Roosevelt NP	Penny Knuckles
Wind Cave NP	Dan Roddy

I ask that those Superintendents that have not yet designated someone please do so as soon as possible. Thank you.